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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, February 25, 1932

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Household Questions." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics,
U.S.D.A.

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The old art of tea making again comes up for discussion. A young housekeeper complains that she can't seem to make good tea.

"Tea making seems such a simple process--just pouring on hot water--that I feel foolish in asking you about it, Aunt Sammy," she writes. "But I must confess that my afternoon tea lacks flavor."

The English and the Chinese, I suppose, are the world's champions at this tea making business. They drink much more of it than we Americans do and they take their tea making seriously. To them the process is much more than just pouring on hot water. It's an art, a tradition, a family rite. I read the other day that according to estimates the English drink about ten times as much tea as we do. And some people think they brew it ten times better.

However that may be, here are three good English rules that will help give you a "good dish of tea," as they say,

First, use only fresh, "bubbling" boiling water.

Second, scald out the pot with it and drain. Put in the tea. Pour on the boiling water.

Third, let the tea steep about five minutes. The English cover the pot with a tea cozy to keep in the heat during this period. And the Chinese, for the same purpose, set the pot in a padded basket.

Tea which isn't allowed to steep just doesn't have the flavor because the tea leaves don't have a chance to unfold fully.

What about the amount of tea to use? That depends on how strong you like your tea. The standard portion of one teaspoon to a cup is usually too much when the tea is allowed to steep.

So much advice for the tea maker.

I've had several questions about selecting kitchenware. Here are a few shopping hints offered by the specialists by way of reply.

When you're selecting saucepans and kettles for top stove cooking, be sure to choose those that heat quickly. Aluminum is a good material for the purpose because this metal is an excellent conductor of heat. With aluminum the heat doesn't waste any time getting from the stove to the food in the saucepan. Iron kettles are good for long cooking because they're sturdy and hold heat evenly, but iron takes longer to heat and is heavy and subject to rust. Both iron and heavy aluminum are good materials for skillets.

When it comes to choosing ovenware, look for materials that absorb and hold heat. Glass and earthenware are good selections because they have these qualities. Enameled ovenware is a close second. You see, dull dark surfaces absorb heat, while shiny surfaces reflect it.

Now here's a conundrum for you. Which does the best baking-- the bright shining new tin or the used, dull tarnished ones? Surprising as it may seem, the dull tin is the most efficient. So it's a waste of time to scour your tins. Leave the dull finish on. They'll bake your pies better. Besides, too much scouring wears off the tin surface.

There's still another point in favor of glass and earthenware dishes for baking. They not only bake foods well, but they save on dish washing. Food is cooked and served in the same dish. Right out of the oven and on to the table with no change. When you're buying earthenware, be sure to get the kind that doesn't crackle, because, after crackling, the dish absorbs grease and may become unsanitary.

For roasting enameled ware is especially good. An enamelware roaster is light and convenient to handle and its dull surface makes it absorb heat easily. Be sure always to treat this material with care to prevent chipping. And never place it to dry over direct heat. That is likely to crack it.

Now about the size and shape of saucepans, kettles and other top-stove ware--an economy point. See that the saucepan you use fully covers the burner or flame. A saucepan that is too small allows the flame to spread up around the sides. That's a waste of good fuel, since it isn't used in cooking. And what's more it will probably blacken and stain the outside of your saucepan. Flat-bottomed pans and kettles of the right size are the most efficient at their job because they utilize the heat under them most completely.

From saucepans, now, to ventilators. The next question is from a lady who wants to know about keeping her house well ventilated and aired in winter. A good question just at this season when we homemakers have to be on the alert to fight the demon of dry impure air in our houses. Nature keeps the air outside pure and clean with rain and snow and bracing winds. Let this pure air into your home--and keep it stirring for comfort and good health.

There are several styles of ventilators which allow the windows to be open even in blustering weather and keep out snow and rain. One type is

a piece of glass which slants diagonally upward into a room, diverting air currents from becoming dangerous drafts. These throw the fresh air up into the room. Others are straight, fit snugly under the raised window and are made of rain-proof material. Cloth ventilators are also useful. You can remove the cloth from the frame for washing. In a steam-heated room a pan of water on the radiator will give the air more moisture.

Here's another letter. One of my friends has sent me a pet device of hers for watering houseplants. Did you ever hear of using a funnel for watering a plant? That's what she does. Plants in hanging baskets, she says, are so difficult to get at. So she places a funnel in the soil and fills it with water every morning. I haven't asked W.R.B. what he thinks of that idea but it sounds good to me.

Another letter writer tells me that she's found her waffle iron a good utensil for making different-looking toast. She discovered this one day when her toaster broke. Now whenever she wants cinnamon toast for afternoon tea, she's likely to make it on her waffle iron to give it that interesting checkerboard appearance.

Speaking of waffles and waffle irons, have I told you that I had an interview with the Recipe Lady recently on making waffles? We had a long chat and I'm now all ready to tell you lots about different kinds of waffles and different ways to use them.

Yes, and tomorrow I'll give you a fine recipe for chocolate waffles for dessert.

There is the lady who asked for a golden gelatin salad made with carrots? Listening in, I hope. She lives in Leominster, Massachusetts. This salad is inexpensive and very pretty, nice for company meals. I don't blame her for wanting the recipe. Here it is. I'm going to read it very slowly so you and she won't miss a word.

Nine ingredients for this golden salad:

2 tablespoons of gelatin
1/2 cup of cold water
2 cups of boiling water
1/2 teaspoon of salt
1 tablespoon of sugar
1 tablespoon of lemon juice
2 tablespoons of tarragon vinegar
1 cup of orange juice and pulp, and
1 cup of grated raw carrot.
1/2 cup of cold water.

Did you get all those nine ingredients? Perhaps I'd better repeat them. (Repeat)

Now to make that salad. Soak the gelatin in the cold water for five minutes. That's the first step. Then add to the softened gelatin, the boiling water, the salt, the sugar, the lemon juice, the vinegar, the orange juice and pulp. In other words, dissolve the gelatin with the boiling water and then add all the other ingredients except the grated carrot. When the mixture has partly jellied, stir in the carrot. Pour the mixture into wet individual molds, and put it in a cold place to set. When it is chilled and firm, turn it out onto crisp lettuce leaves and serve it with mayonnaise or cream salad dressing.

Tomorrow: As I said, some news for the waffle maker.

